

# Highway panel hears concerns about 303 noise

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Several Sun City West residents in a crowd of 100 told a state committee Tuesday that improvements must be made along Loop 303 to reduce noise from vehicles traveling along the community's northern border.

A standing-room-only crowd in Surprise City Council chambers urged the Citizen's Transportation Oversight Committee to make improvements that could include sound walls and rubberized asphalt.

Walt Maas of Sun City West gave a multimedia presentation to illustrate the line of sight and noise issues. Residents have complained for years about the Loop 303 traffic. He also said the study ADOT did on the noise levels, which ranked the overall noise below federal and state guidelines, was flawed. He said morning and evening rush hours produce noise levels that spike above those guidelines.

Maas wanted the committee to take action on recommending ADOT push for getting sound walls and rubberized asphalt in place in anticipation of the planned project of connecting I-10 to I-17 via the Loop 303, something residents say will increase traffic and noise in the area.

Committee member Jack Lunsford said the panel could not vote on the matter because it was listed as a discussion item, not an action item.

The committee did agree to put the item on the next meeting's agenda as an action item. That meeting will be sometime in March.

Tim Tait, ADOT community relations director, said ADOT has been operating the Loop 303 since taking over from MCDOT about 1½ years ago.

"We recognize the concerns of the residents," Tait said. "They are very reasonable."

The Loop 303 is considered a parkway, not freeway, Tait said. Plans are in the works to add concrete, rubberized asphalt and other noise abatement measures when Loop 303 links I-10 and I-17. Those improvements are expected to be completed by 2016, but the Sun City West segment is expected to be completed prior to that.

Tait said Prop 400 plans are being reviewed to determine the order in which 11 highway projects are constructed, including the Loop 303 addition.

Tait said ADOT had community meetings and put the decibel detectors in spots recommended by the residents. Though the devices recorded some spikes in noise, the majority of the readings registered below federal and state guidelines.

"We can't put up sound walls when there are spikes in decibels," Tait said "If we did, we would have sound walls all over the Valley."

Maas said he was "pleased, but I'm not totally satisfied. I'm pleased in the outcome because the committee members seem receptive to our situation and are willing to discuss and pursue it further."